instantaneous. It was Edward Crankshaw. Afterwards, he told me that my terrific salute led him to reflect that old sweats such as he supposed me to be were the backbone of the British Army. To the. consternation of our driver, we began to fall about in the car in a condition of hopeless mirth at the unconscious deception we had practised on one another. I believe I never took the war, certainly not the army, quite seriously again.

Though I did not realise it at the time, no conditions could have been more appropriate for concluding a study of the Thirties. As a pseudo-warrior in a still pseudo-war (my family were living near Battle, in Sussex, so that my leave-pass would be made out Tor the purpose of proceeding to Battle'; about the only British soldier, as I used to reflect, then so bent) I was ideally placed to survey the last phases of the decade which had just passed. At the time it seemed otherwise. I anticipated an impending Judgment Day, and even asked myself whether it was worth while bothering to complete a manuscript which was bound never to be published, and which in any case would almost certainly be destroyed in the holocaust from the air, long prophesied by all the experts, and expected at any moment. What I failed to realise was that Judgment Day had come and gone, unnoticed. When the holocaust belatedly occurred, it only fell upon what was already a wasteland; like the bombard-ment of Pompeii in the course of the Italian campaign, leaving traces of bullet marks on walls volcanically blitzed many

centuries before.

However, I did finish the book; rather cursorily, as a matter of fact, and it was duly published, with, as things turned out, a certain measure of success, even though its appearance was swamped by the march of events. By that time, we had been transferred from Ash Vale to the Island of Sheppey, where we constituted the sole garrison against an anticipated *Panzer* invasion, having been issued for the purpose with steel helmets, twelve rounds of ammunition, and rifles which we never had an opportunity of firing. Our nocturnal prowlings about the coast were interrupted by the arrival of demoralised